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September 16, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair  
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Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning  
Director

**DAVID AND MARGARET FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW**

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the David and Margaret Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in March 2016. The FFA has one office located in the Fifth Supervisorial District and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children and Probation youth. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "in partnership with others, will provide therapeutic foster care services to children and families to protect, nurture, and advocate on behalf of children and youth who have been abused and/or neglected and are removed from their families."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the FFA's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas: Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment.

In June 2016, the OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas of the QAR; therefore the FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

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If you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Aldo Marin, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

PLB:KR  
KDR:rds

#### Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer  
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee  
Calvin C. Remington, Interim Chief Probation Officer  
Charles Rich, Executive Director, David and Margaret FFA  
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division  
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**DAVID AND MARGARET FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY  
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)  
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016**

**SCOPE OF REVIEW**

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of David and Margaret Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in March 2016. The purpose of the QAR is to assess the FFA's service delivery and to ensure that the FFA is providing children with quality care and services in a safe environment which includes physical care, social and emotional support, education and workforce readiness, and other services to protect and enhance their growth and development.

The QAR is an in-depth case review and interview process designed to assess how children and their families are benefiting from services received and how well the services are working. The QAR utilizes a six-point rating scale as a *yardstick* for measuring the situation observed in specific focus areas. The QAR assessed the following focus areas:

**Status Indicators:**

- Safety
- Permanency
- Placement Stability
- Visitation

**Practice Indicators:**

- Engagement
- Service Needs
- Assessment & Linkages
- Teamwork
- Tracking & Adjustment

For Status Indicators, the QAR focuses on the focus child's functioning during the most recent 30-day period and for Practice Indicators, the QAR focuses on the FFA's service delivery during the most recent 90-day period.

For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with three focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three FFA staff members, three certified foster parents, and three service providers.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 30 DCFS placed children in 20 certified foster homes. There were no Probation youth placed with the FFA at the time of the review. The focus children's average number of placements was three, their overall average length of placement was 15 months and their average age was 10. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review.

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**QAR SCORING**

The FFA received a score for each focus area based on information gathered from on-site visits, agency file reviews, DCFS court reports and updated case plans, and interviews with the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers, and the focus children. The minimum acceptable score is 6 in the area of Safety and 5 in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<b>Safety</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children are free of abuse, neglect and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	6 - Optimal Safety Status	The focus children have a highly safe living situation with fully reliable and competent caregivers and are protected well at all times. Protective strategies are fully operative and dependable.
<b>Permanency</b> - The degree to which the focus children are living with certified foster parents, who are likely to remain in this role until the focus children reach adulthood, or the focus children are in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the focus children, the FFA staff, certified foster parents, DCFS CSWs and if applicable, Department of Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.	5	6 - Optimal Status	The focus children have optimal permanency. The focus children have achieved legal permanency and/or live in a family setting which the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and all team members have evidence will endure lifelong.

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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<b>Placement Stability</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children's daily living, learning and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions. Known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruptions.	5	6 - Optimal Stability	The focus children have optimal stability in placement settings and enjoy positive and enduring relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers. There is no history of instability over the past 30 days.
<b>Visitation</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents support maintaining important connections with significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visitation and other means.	5	5 - Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections	Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family members/NREFMs through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs have regular visits.
<b>Engagement</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents working with the focus children, their family members/NREFMs and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to concentrate on the focus children's strengths and needs.	5	5 - Good Engagement Efforts	To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, DPOs (if applicable), caregivers and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent efforts are being used.

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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<b>Service Needs</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children work toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the focus children's unique needs.	5	5 - Good Supports and Services	A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.
<b>Assessment &amp; Linkages</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs understand the focus children's strengths, needs, preferences and underlying needs and services provided are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals.	5	5 - Good Assessment and Understanding	The focus children's functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is frequently updated.
<b>Teamwork</b> - The degree to which the "right people" for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, have formed a working team that meets, talks and/or makes plans together.	5	5 - Good Teamwork	The team contains most of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks and/or plans together.

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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<b>Tracking &amp; Adjustment -</b> The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs are carefully tracking the progress that the focus children are making, changing family circumstances, attainment of goals and planned outcomes.	5	5 - Good Tracking and Adjustment Process	Intervention strategies, supports and services being provided to the focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking and communication of the focus children's status is occurring.

OHCMD conducted the last QAR of the FFA in May 2015, and noted that the FFA did not require a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as the FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas of the QAR. In September 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for maintaining and/or improving their level of service. Based on the information below, it appears that the FFA maintained an acceptable level of service in all 9 focus areas of their 2015-2016 QAR.

**STATUS INDICATORS**  
(Measured over last 30 days)

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
<b>2014-2015 Scores</b>	6	6	6	5
<b>2015-2016 Scores</b>	6	6	6	5

In the areas of Safety, Permanency, Placement Stability, and Visitation, the FFA continues to maintain the quality of their provision services and stability to the focus children. The FFA Social Workers conduct formal and informal quality assurance inspections during their monthly visits to ensure the safety of all placed children in their certified foster homes. The FFA Social Workers discuss their assessments of the certified foster parents in weekly staff meetings. One FFA Social Worker stated that during each visit he will ask the placed children how they feel about the level of safety in their respective certified foster homes and will address any concerns they may have. The FFA's Quality Assurance staff makes

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announced and unannounced visits to ensure the certified foster parents are providing appropriate supervision. The FFA Quality Assurance staff also provides training on Title 22 Regulations to their certified foster parents during their visits. The Quality Assurance staff stated that they increase their monthly visits to semi-monthly visits to the certified foster home if more supervision and training is warranted to ensure the safety and well-being of the placed children. The FFA provides training that covers a range of topics including safety, behavioral issues, and issues that are specific to each certified foster home. The certified foster parents reported that they receive monthly training on FFA procedures, protocols, State regulations, and the County contract. The focus children stated that their certified foster parents provide daily supervision which makes them feel safe. The FFA Quality Assurance staff stated they work with each certified foster parent to ensure they discuss with each placed child how they feel about their certified foster home and if their needs are being met. The DCFS CSWs stated that they did not have any concerns about the FFA's certified foster homes.

The FFA continues to assist the focus children in reaching their permanency goals. The first focus child is receiving Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA) services. The FFA Social Worker, focus child, DCFS CSW, and certified foster parents have met on several occasions to discuss the PPLA plan. The certified foster parent is in support of having this focus child continue to reside in her home as long as the focus child requires her care. The second focus child is receiving Family Reunification services and after nine months in placement is in the process of reuniting with his mother. The third focus child is receiving Adoption services. The third focus child reported that he has met with his FFA Social Worker and certified foster parents to discuss possible legal guardianship with his current certified foster parents, if an adoptive home is not identified. The focus children reported that they have discussed their permanency goals with their assigned FFA Social Worker so that each child is aware of their case plans. The FFA Social Workers stated that they provide feedback to the DCFS CSWs by phone and e-mails regarding the visitation and their assessments of the benefits of the visits.

The FFA works with the first focus child's Court Appointed Special Advocate in arranging and scheduling visitation with her mother who is hospitalized, and brother which supports her PPLA permanency plan. The DCFS CSW, FFA Social Worker, certified foster parents, and the first focus child met to discuss plans of possible legal guardianship with her respective certified foster parents. Her certified foster parents expressed their desire to provide care for the focus child as long as needed. In turn, the first and third focus children, who have resided in their current placement for an average of 17 months, stated that they wanted to remain placed with their certified foster parents.

With regard to the area of Visitation, the FFA Social Workers inform each placed child and each certified foster parent of the placed child's visitation court orders. The certified foster parents are required to call the family members/NREFMs and confirm the visit prior to the visit date. The FFA stated this action works to increase the number of visits the placed children complete and reduce the emotional disappointments that comes from canceled visits. All of the focus children stated that the FFA transports them to their visits with their parents and siblings. The FFA's provision of transportation services supports the focus children in reaching their permanency goals. The focus children have established positive

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relationships with key adult supporters such as, their certified foster parents and FFA Social Workers.

**PRACTICE INDICATORS**  
*(Measured over last 90 days)*

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	5	5	5	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5	5

In the areas of Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork, and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to provide a good array of services. The FFA makes good efforts to engage the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made on their behalf. The FFA Social Workers stated that they get regular feedback from the placed children and DCFS CSWs during their visits. It is during these visits that the FFA Social Workers assess how well the focus children and their DCFS CSWs are developing a working relationship with team members. The FFA Social Workers stated that they have at minimum, monthly phone calls and e-mails to the DCFS CSWs, which are increased as needed depending on the needs of the placed child. The FFA Social Workers invite the parents, service providers, and DCFS CSWs to team meetings to discuss the case plans to ensure the focus children achieve their goals. Two focus children stated that they feel their FFA Social Workers and DCFS CSWs listen to them and they assist them whenever they make requests. The FFA Social Workers stated that they act to establish a working relationship with the placed children, their family members/NREFMs and DCFS CSWs at the start of placement during the first team meeting. The FFA Social Workers stated that they work at communicating with the placed children, certified foster parents, and DCFS CSWs through weekly announced and unannounced visits to the certified foster homes. The FFA Social Workers stated that their assessments are ongoing and that they give feedback to the placed children, certified foster parents, and DCFS CSWs in order to team with them to set the most appropriate goals for each placed child. The services and intervention strategies identified in the case plans and Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) match the services that are being provided to the focus children. One focus child is receiving tutoring to address his educational needs in the area of reading. The FFA Social Workers and Quality Assurance staff work with the certified foster parents to ensure that they make ongoing efforts to maintain contact with relatives of the placed children. All three focus children are receiving weekly therapeutic services to address their mental health needs.

Tracking and adjustments of the focus children's progress is conducted on a weekly basis by the FFA Social Workers who meet with their supervisors to review their case plan goals. The FFA Social Workers stated that tracking is also done on each certified foster home on a monthly and quarterly basis by their Quality Assurance staff to ensure that the placed children are well adjusted in their respective placement. DCFS CSWs reported that the FFA staff stays in regular contact with them via phone calls and e-mails in regards to the progress and adjustment of the focus children's case plan goals.

## **NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES**

In January 2016, the OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirements; Certified Foster Homes; Facility and Environment; Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery; Health and Medical Needs; Personal Rights and Social/Emotional Well-Being; and Personal Needs/Survival and Economic Well-Being. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure special incidents are appropriately reported and timely submitted; that safety inspections of the home and premises are conducted; that disaster drills are conducted by all certified foster parents; that criminal background checks are conducted; that vehicle inspections are conducted timely by a certified mechanic; that food inspections are conducted to ensure all expired perishables are discarded; that the FFA review the requirements of comprehensive quarterly reports with their staff; that all placed children have timely Initial dental examinations; that the personal rights of placed children are not violated; and that a Life Book is completed for every placed child.

In June 2016, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support addressing methods on maintaining their current level of care. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in all 9 focus areas of the QAR; therefore, the FFA did not require a QIP. The OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training, and consultation to assist the FFA, as needed.